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The situation in the Middle East

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Sixty-ninth year

Identical letters dated 25 March 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to set out the position of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) over the period from 4 December 2013 to 10 March 2014 (S/2014/199).

- The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that it is committed to its obligations under the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement and has accordingly respected the mandate of UNDOF and facilitated its work in every way. The Government remains firmly committed to the safety and security of United Nations personnel and premises. For over four decades, for as long as Israel has occupied the Syrian Golan, the Government has cooperated and coordinated closely and fully with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNDOF command.

- Israel, on the other hand, has persisted in its repeated violations of the 1974 Agreement on Disengagement, the Charter of the United Nations and Security Council resolutions. It has repeatedly attacked locations inside Syrian territory under spurious and mendacious pretexts. It has provided direct and indirect support for the armed terrorist groups active in and around the area of separation. On 5, 18 and 19 March 2014, Israel attacked civilian and military targets within Syrian territory in an act of direct support for the armed terrorist groups. The United Nations and the Security Council were immediately informed of the attacks. One officer of the internal security forces was killed, and 14 others were injured, along with four civilians. The locations sustained extensive material damage. In addition, the report details numerous Israeli violations of the Agreement on Disengagement. For example, on 11 February 2014, 11 Israeli soldiers crossed the line of separation. On 5 March 2014, Israel fired 17 tank rounds towards the village of Hamadiyah in the area of separation, injuring 14 people and damaging a mosque and a school.

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- In addition to those acts of aggression, Israel has directly supported the terrorist groups. It has treated injured terrorists and returned them into Syrian territory, where they have continued to commit their crimes against the local inhabitants and peacekeepers. Those violations are detailed in the report of the Secretary-General. All the while, Israel has made a point of complaining to the Security Council whenever a shepherd crosses the line of separation. Yet at the same time, on 31 January 2014, during his visit to the occupied Syrian Golan on 31 January 2014, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Israeli entity made statements that reflected an insolent approach to the events in Syria, exposed Israel's expansionist intentions and displayed utter disdain for all United Nations resolutions on ending the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and all other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, particularly Security Council resolution 497 (1981). He urged parliament to settle the issue of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights within the framework of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and the events in Syria, and stated that that comprehensive deal must include an understanding among Israel, the international community and, first and foremost, the United States of America, that the Golan was an integral part of the State of Israel. Mr. Liberman claimed that, because of the security concerns relating to Israel's ability to defend the north of the country, the international community should recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. Those insolent statements make it incumbent on the Security Council to emphasize that, politically, legally and morally, it is unacceptable that Israel should be allowed to persist in its contemptuous refusal to implement the relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly Security Council resolution 497 (1981), which states that the Israeli decision of 14 December 1981 to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan is null and void and without legal effect. The General Assembly has reaffirmed that position in its resolutions on the topic, the most recent of which is resolution 68/84.

- The report refers to numerous crimes and grave violations perpetrated by the armed terrorist groups with Israeli backing. UNDOF personnel saw the bodies of five individuals who had been beheaded. On 20 January 2014, the groups stopped an UNDOF convoy and looked for individuals of a specific nationality and religious affiliation. The terrorist groups used a tank in the vicinity of United Nations observation post 52, in addition to anti-tank missiles and improvised explosive devices. It is therefore no longer acceptable for the Secretariat to limit itself to calling on countries with influence to "strongly convey to the armed opposition groups in the UNDOF area of operation the need to halt all activities that endanger United Nations peacekeepers on the ground". Rather, the Security Council must take immediate measures in respect of the States that support, fund and give safe haven to the armed terrorist groups. To ignore the danger posed by the groups' presence and activities in the area of separation would exacerbate the instability of the area and jeopardize the safety and security of United Nations personnel.

- Syria stresses the need for United Nations personnel to respect their mandate. It is therefore surprised at paragraph 24 of the report, which states that United Nations personnel at position 80 were unable to provide "food, medicine and water" to an "armed opposition group". Under the mandate of UNDOF and the

relevant Security Council resolutions, it is a given that the Force does not meet with terrorist groups.

- The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic stresses that it is mindful of its obligations and has exercised the utmost restraint in confronting the activities of armed terrorist groups in the UNDOF area of operation. It understands the character of the area and the obligations that are in force. It reiterates that the actions of Syrian law enforcement forces are a response to an emergency situation arising from exceptional circumstances, namely the terrorist activities of terrorist groups in the area of separation. Syrian law enforcement forces have acted in response to appeals from the local population. The latter has borne the brunt of the terrorist activities which, as the report of the Secretary-General recognizes, have also targeted UNDOF and its personnel.

- Syria commends the efforts of UNDOF to fulfil its mandate. It again emphasizes the need to address the fundamental reason for the presence of UNDOF, namely the continuing Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan. It reiterates its call on the Security Council to enforce its resolutions in that regard, particularly resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981), which reject the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and require Israel to withdraw from all occupied Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan, to the line of 4 June 1967.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 35, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic
to the United Nations